UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE (Case No. 99,252-A) Mertens et al. Mertens et al. Art Unit: 1746 Serial No.: 09/998,889 Filed: November 1, 2001 For: Method and Apparatus for Removing a Liquid from a Surface

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Mail Stop RCE Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

This Preliminary Amendment is being filed in conjunction with a Request for Continued Examination in the above-referenced matter and is responsive to the Office Action mailed on November 17, 2003. A petition for a one month extension of time is also being filed herewith, thereby extending the time for reply until March 17, 2004; therefore, this filing is timely. Please amend the application as follows:

Amendments to the Claims are reflected in the listing of the claims, which begins on page 2 of this paper.

Remarks/Arguments begin on page 6 of this paper.